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Autocracy to democracy: how African autocrats have fallen and what happens next

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AUTOCRACY TO DEMOCRACY:
HOW AFRICAN AUTOCRATS HAVE FALLEN
AND WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

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ABSTRACT

The past decade was not a good one for African democracies. Many autocrats are still in power and consolidating existing infrastructure to extend their rule indefinitely. However, autocrats eventually fall, both from reasons related to mortality and others. Looking at five cases of autocrats leaving office in the last decade, this paper looks to show that the different methods wherein autocrats are removed from office make a difference in how democracy may be consolidated in the power vacuum. The paper finds that not only does the method of removal not matter, but the power vacuum left by the autocrat does not give room for democracy to grow.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CCM	Chama Cha Mapinduzi
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FESCI	Student Federation of Ivory Coast
LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
MDC - A	Movement for Democratic Change - Alliance
MDC - T	Movement for Democratic Change - Tsvangirai
NCA	National Constitutional Agency
NIS	National Intelligence Agency
ZCTU	Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions
ZNLWVA	Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veteran Association

Introduction

20 years after the third wave of democracy hit Africa, there are still autocrats all over Africa. These autocrats have cleverly manipulated the system to create a facade of democracy that the international community is willing to accept, if begrudgingly. Presidents for life, such as Uganda's Museveni and Rwanda's Kagame, have thwarted the rule of law in order to remain in power for extended amounts of time. With the autocrats employing increasing amounts of clever methods to remain in power, transition through democratic means might not be possible.

The name of the game has certainly changed since the last wave. The decade of the 90's brought fresh hope to democracy in Africa; hope that was more often than not squandered. The autocrats that cemented their power in the last wave of democracy are aging: Museveni is 76, and Biya is 88. At some point their grip in the country should falter and their reigns end. After the 2000s, the international community continuously asked for more democracy from African countries; most countries in Africa have multiparty elections now -- however unequal the playing field may be.

In 2017, the unthinkable happened: Mugabe was ousted from power in the form of a coup. Mugabe, being one of the oldest leaders of state in the world, had a falling out when he pushed his wife to be his successor. The military intervened and seated Mugabe's ex-vice president, Mnangagwa, into power. While there was a presidential election, Mnanagagwa was able to retain power.

In 2019, another unthinkable: Sudan's dictator, Omar al Bashir, left office forcibly due to popular insurrection and intervention from the military. Democratic

progress has been floundering due to a myriad of issues, chief of which being the ongoing pandemic. The situation is still ongoing.

The central question for this paper, therefore, is: how can democracy manifest after a long-serving autocrats leave? While focusing on Africa, this question reverberates throughout contemporary history. Leaders such as Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin have been at the helm of their countries since at least the turn of the century. Putin and Xi are painfully aware of his mortality -- their chief worry is to groom a successor who will carry on their work. One must realize, however, that Xi and Putin have been synonymous to the countries that they have been ruling, as they have shaped contemporary China and Russia. Should they perish, the gap left would not easily be filled.

The hole that they leave when they retire can only lead to some sort of infighting within the higher echelon of the system. While the gap left by African autocrats may not be as impacting internationally as those left by international giants, it might be significant enough in the state to crack the door ever so slightly to allow room for democracy.

Several questions come to mind while looking at these contemporary examples. First, how do African autocrats lose power? Supposedly, they have been able to subvert the system to stay in power for exorbitant amounts of time. What chain of events would lead someone in a stable position to lose out?

Second, does ousting an autocrat result in a system that is hospitable for democracy? An autocrat that leaves -- whether voluntarily or forcibly -- would leave a power vacuum in the political system. Would this power vacuum be conducive to democracy?

The paper will look at examples from five countries that have had autocrats leave office through various means in the 2010s -- Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Zimbabwe. The five cases represent four different ways that autocratic regimes have fallen and the different ways that the ensuing government dealt with the aftermath.

Say that it isn't possible to oust the autocrat by democratic elections. This means that the country has to look toward off-the-book methods of deposition. A coup would be the most surefire way, but there is a big chance for the military to take over: back to square one. Mass mobilization of civilians would certainly be an event that is broadcasted around the international community. But a civilian protest doesn't necessarily lead to a democratic society: more often than not, the leader would make small concessions to appease the public. Mass mobilization of civilians might also invite the military to crack down, resulting in civilian casualties.

The Regime Change section will examine literature around the world to determine what combination of variables result in an autocrat leaving office. The democratization section will look at literature around the word since the start of the Arab Spring to pinpoint which combination of variables result in a long-standing democracy after regime change. The aim of the two sections will be to produce a formula that can travel.

The case study section will apply the findings from the previous sections to contemporary case studies. The goal of this project is to investigate if the fall of an autocrat leads to an environment more hospitable to democracy.

Background

Falling Autocrats

The majority of African governments have certain democratic tendencies but don't have the civil liberties associated with a healthy democracy. Rather, the leaders of these countries use repression along with democratic infrastructure in order to exercise authoritarian rule. Linz and Stephan write that these types of governments are "authoritarian democratic hybrid regimes. (L&J, 2013).

Most African countries -- with the exception of Eswatini, which is an absolute monarch -- have elections. Most African countries have constitutions that, to a certain extent, have checks and balances. This doesn't mean, however, that the leaders uphold democratic principles. African autocrats have become crafty in manipulating the rule of law to suit their needs.

In a similar vein, most African countries -- with the exception of Eswatini, which is an absolute monarch -- have elections. Most African countries have constitutions that, to a certain extent, have checks and balances. This doesn't mean, however, that the leaders uphold democratic principles. African autocrats have become crafty in manipulating the rule of law to suit their needs.

Jackson and Rosberg posit that personal rule is inherently authoritarian (J&R, 1982, 23). They define authoritarian rule as:

> "an arbitrary and usually a personal government that uses law and the coercive instruments of the state to expedite its own purposes of

> monopolizing power and denies the political rights and opportunities of all other groups to compete for that power. (J&R, 1982, 23)

Personal rule puts the ruler above everyone else. The ruler personifies the power of the country. For example, it would be impossible to think of current day Cameroon without Paul Biya.

Autocrats don't have to be long-time rulers, although a lot of them are. Of the examples that this paper will deal with, there are some who aimed to subvert democratic principles in the last few months of their presidency. For the sake of simplicity, however, the paper will mainly deal with those who displayed repressive tendencies during their tenure.

In a democratic society, the government is run by checks and balances. For example, the US is run by three branches of government in tandem with the president. Each group has different jurisdictions. Although the president is the leader of the country, he cannot suddenly decide to deploy troops for his own perceived gains. Such is not the case for autocrats. Rather, they finesse domestic politics with two key actors at their side: security apparati and elites. These two actors aid autocrats in controlling the masses.

Autocrats usually have strong ties with the security apparatus, be it the military or secret police (Jackson, Rosberg). Because they themselves have kept their position of power through forceful means, they are wary that they could lose said position in the same way.

However, security apperati, and more so military organizations, are to be the sword of the will of the people (Bellin, 2018). Should the popular mass go against the

rule of an autocratic regime, the elites have yet another decision to make: is going against the will of the masses more profitable than going against the regime (Bellin, 2018). Taking the events of the Arab Spring as guidance, Bellin posits that there are certain conditions that lead the security apparatus to stand down against the mass. Most importantly, the citizens have to engage in a non-violent protest. Should the mass engage in a non-violent means of opposition, the military has less of a ground to justify using force. Such was the case for Tunisia and Egypt.

It is important to remember that African politics is run by patronage (Jackson, Rosberg). The elites that control the security apparatus are incentivized to follow the autocrat through the same method. The elites are complacent because they get economic and political compensation by doing so. Should the autocrat show indication that they will not be able to continue such a relationship, the military would have no reason to continue supporting the regime.

While the strength of an autocrat comes from the lack of institutions and checks-and-balance mechanisms, the lack of said mechanisms mean the autocrat has to deal directly with elites (J&R, 1982, 25). Should the autocrat lose faith from either one or both, the autocrat's time in office is limited.

There are largely five ways that autocrats leave office. First, the autocrat could decide that he would step down, and perhaps designate a successor. Second, the autocrat could be the victim of a coup. This was the case for the majority of African autocrats. Third, the autocrat could be overthrown by popular protest. Fourth, the autocrat could pass away in office. Fifth, the autocrat could leave office in a democratic defeat.

While it seems unlikely, there are some authoritarians that step down. Julius Nyerere decided to step down in 1989 after ruling Tanzania since independence. He established multi party rule in the country as well. President Rawling from Ghana gained the presidency via coup but decided to establish a democracy and left office after two terms.

A coup is perhaps the type of leadership change that is most associated with Africa. There have been less and less coups since the fall of the Soviet Union, but that doesn't mean that coups have ceased to exist. Most recently, there have been coups in Sudan and Mali that have yet to produce fruitful results of change for the better.

Popular protest swept through North Africa and the Arab world during the Arab spring but failed to see any long lasting changes for the better. The only success story of the regional movement was Tunisia. However, one must remember that having a less democratic regime doesn't necessarily mean that the mass will eventually rise up. Before the Arab Spring, political scientists even went on to theorise that there were zones of influence in the world that defies the allure of democracy (Huntington, 1996).

Recently, the president of Tanzania -- an avid denier of COVID -- was not seen for an extended period of time and was declared to be passed away. Considering the dominant status of the ruling party (Chama Cha Mapinduzi), the vice president Suhulu became the president. There aren't a lot of cases where an autocrat dies in office, but it does happen.

Lastly, some autocrats accept democratic defeat. Prime example would be Kenneth Kaunda, former president of Zambia. While Kaunda was president for decades,

bad international and domestic situations resulted in him accepting multiparty democracy. He lost to Frederik Chiluba (Bratton, 1992).

On the other hand, an autocrat could illegally dispute the election results. This was the case for The Gambia and Cote d'Ivoire. As will be discussed in the case selection, the leaders disputed the election results -- which were considered to be correct according to domestic and international authorities -- and tried to take back the presidency forcefully.

In all of these reasons except for the fourth, there are possible explanations as to why it happened. Treisman found that there are largely five ways that autocrats fall: hubris, needless risk taking, premature reform, Trusting the wrong person, and needless violence (Treisman, 2020). Hubris is when an autocrat puts too much trust in his power and undermines the wrong person. Risk taking may be opening up the government to democratic reforms when the autocrat doesn't have an iron grip on its populace. Premature reform would be a case where the government introduces reforms that they are not fully ready for. An autocrat could also trust the wrong person to succeed him, which could effectively end autocratic rule. Or an autocrat could engage in pointless violence that leads to mass uprising.

Naturally, autocrats would want to avoid all of this from happening, often with a carrot or a stick. Autocrats can either utilize their position to entice the masses from going against them, or they can utilize their position to reprimand those who participate in unruly behavior.

For the first scenario, the autocrat would create a system wherein the people would benefit from the resources that the country has to offer. Of course, this is in the case that there are substantial resources available in the country as is the case in various Middle Eastern countries. Countries such as the United Arab Emirates use oil revenue to service the populace and keep them happy. A happy mass is a mass that will not rise up. This is the argument that Ross made in his seminal article, *Does Oil Hinder Democracy* (Ross 2001). Natural resources, because they are profitable, makes it easier for the regime to appease the mass.

Ross posits that there are three causal mechanisms that supports the lack of democracy in oil/mineral rich states:

> "A 'rentier effect,' which suggests that resource rich governments use low tax rates and patronage to relieve pressures for greater accountability; a 'repression effect,' which argues that resource wealth retards democratization by enabling their governments to boost their funding for internal security; and a 'modernization effect,' which holds that growth based on the export of oil and minerals fail to bring about the social and cultural change that tend to produce democracy. (Ross, 2001, 327-328)

Ross finds that high taxes resulted in a more democratic government. Adversely, higher government consumption of the GDP and leads to a less democratic government. The larger the government is, the less likely it is for the government to be democratic. Ross also finds that while an abundance of oil might lead to a bigger military, mineral wealth

doesn't necessarily correlate with a military size. Ross also found that ethnic tension doesn't necessarily go hand in hand with undemocratic governance.

However, Ross's findings were regarding regimes all across the world through a prolonged amount of time. One should be skeptical if Ross's work travels to contemporary Africa, as Africa's system of governance has developed like none other.

Additionally, Ross considered all democracies equal in his analysis. This couldn't be further from the truth -- especially in contemporary Africa. It would be foolish to equate the democratic structure of governance found in Ethiopia with that found in Senegal.

Another way would be for the autocrat to employ the use of force against the populace. This was the case for a lot of African countries in the past, such as Uganda under Idi Amin. Out of the two options, this would be less appealing for an autocrat that wishes to retain power for an indefinite period of time. An overly oppressive system of governance brings scrutiny from the international community. In the case of Idi Amin, his rule was thwarted when Julius Nyerere, along with the backing of the international community, stormed the country at the endpoint of the Ugandan-Tanzanian War.

Democratization

Leadership change does not guarantee democratic rule. As mentioned earlier, Egypt's mass protests, along with the military stand down, was met with regime change. Long-time autocrat Hosni Mubarak was ousted from power, lending way for a civilian, Morsi, to become president. Morsi's rule, however, was not long lived; civilian protests coupled with a coup in 2013 ousted the 5th president of Egypt. Again, the regime changes

only took a turn for the worse, since Egypt's issue regarding violence and corruption has not changed since the initial ousting of Mubarak.

The cases that the paper is looking at incorporates all types of leadership change. A president could be ousted due to a coup, or a president could resist transition until he/she is exiled by the incoming president. The president could also leave the presidency but still hold onto enormous amounts of power. Finally, the president could die in office.

Previous works on democratic transition have focused on other parts of the world. Acemoglu and Robinson talked about the four main paths of political development. First, a path that leads from non-democracy gradually to democracy. This kind of democracy is never threatened, such as the democracy in Britain. There is a path that leads to democracy but quickly collapses, such as in Argentina. Democratization happens again and again in this path. The third, which diverges into two paths, is one where a country remains non-democratic, or democratization is delayed. Democracy could never set because the society is relatively fair and prosperous, such as in Singapore, but also because the society is highly unequal and exploitative, such as with Apartheid South Africa. They found that democratic transitions happen when the elite controlling the existing regime extend concessions too far.

Looking at the cases at hand, it seems that the countries took the path of Argentina or Apartheid South Africa. Both the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zimbabwe had leaders that made the wealth gap highly unequal and exploitative, and The Gambia and Cote d'Ivoire have had democracy set and fall numerous times. The only exception is Tanzania, where it seems like they took the path of Singapore -- their non-democratic

governance had no problems when the country was prosperous, and only became an issue when living conditions worsened.

O'Donnell and Schmitter define democratization as "the process whereby the rules and procedures of citizenship are either applied to political institutions previously governed by other principles or expanded to include persons not previously enjoying such rights and obligations. (O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986)" They also added that there are two groups in authoritarian regimes whose orientations change how transition happens. The first group are the hardliners, who believe that authoritarian rule is desirable, and the sideliners, who believe that some sort of legitimation is necessary.

The number of overt hardliners drastically decreased after the fall of the Soviet Union, although the advent of China in Africa has brought back a resurgence of hardliners. Rather, there are soft-liners who use the west's markers for democratic progress as charades to mask their authoritarian regime.

This begs the question; what conditions foster democratic rule after a successful regime change? Traditional notions of democratic transition would not apply, since the economic and social situation would be more or less the same before and after the falling of a dictator.

A mass mobilization of youth is somewhat likely to bring democratic change. The key demographic of Tunisia and Egypt (the only two countries that successfully administered regime change during the Arab Spring)'s civilian protests were the youth. Even outside the confines of Africa and the Middle East, Korea transitioned from autocratic rule when university students mobilized in mass against the regime in protest.

The youth were critical in installing democratic rule in Serbia, Georgia, and Ukraine (Kuzio, 2006).

However, there were certain conditions that led to democratization in Tunisia that didn't in Egypt. Linz and Stephan pointed out that the difference was threefold. First, the leading party after the revolution distanced itself from Muslim Brotherhood ideology and embraced democracy as the ideal form of governance. Second, the liberals in the Tunisian government were willing to work with the religious. Third, the political society developed in tandem with civil society in Tunisia, while it didn't in Egypt. These three cases led the government to get a score of 3 out of 7 from the Freedom House's political-rights score (L&S, 2013).

Argument

Reviewing the literature and looking at examples in real life, it seems unlikely that standing autocrats will be driven out of power or that such ousting will result in positive, democratic change to a given state. However unlikely it may be, there are times when an autocrat loses faith of the different groups that support him, which ultimately leads to change in government. The question, however, is whether such changes are positive to democracy; in other words, is there room for democracy to set if an autocrat leaves office?

The paper will argue that it does not, and that the method in which the autocrat falls has little consequence. The literature clearly states that autocratic governance is more complex than it seems. Museveni has been able to stay in office for as long as he has because he appeases the forces that allow it, and the same goes for Paul Biya. Barring a purge of a country's political, economic, and social hierarchy, the same elites will still be there after an autocrat passes. Unless the elites themselves view that democracy is inevitable, there is no guarantee that any change for democracy will be long-lasting.

The paper will look at four of the situations discussed above where autocrats could lose power: leaving with a successor in power, coup, death, and electoral defeat. Joseph Kabila of the DRC was rumored to have made a deal with Felix Tshisekedi to share power after his defeat in the 2019 elections. The DRC will be looked at to determine what the level of democracy has been for the country. The coup will be represented by the case of Zimbabwe, wherein Mugabe was ousted by his own security apparatus. The lack of democratization from electoral defeat will be shown by two cases:

Cote d'Ivoire and The Gambia. The two cases will be grouped together due to their similarities. The paper will include Tanzania, whose president Magufuli died due to disease and was replaced by his vice president, as the cause of death of autocrat.

All of the cases -- except for Tanzania -- have had a history of non-democratic rule. The DRC, Côte d'Ivore, The Gambia, and Zimbabwe were ruled for decades by Mobutu, Houphouet-Boigny, Jawara, and Mugabe (respectively). The case of Tanzania was added only to demonstrate that such cases exist, and that in cases such as those, one can expect continuity.

Case Studies

The Gambia and Cote d'Ivore

The Gambia was liberated with Dawda Jawara as the head of state -- Jawara remained as president until he was driven out of office by Yahya Jammeh in a coup. Jawara was forced to exile, which lasted until 2002.

The previous president, Yahya Jammeh, rose to the position of leadership due to a coup in 1994. He was able to retain the seat until 2016, when a presidential election swung in favour of the current president, Barrow. His autocratic tendencies, mixed with economic strife, led to widespread suffering and discontent from the citizens (Saine, 2008).

Surprisingly enough, Jammeh won the two elections since he took office without international condemnation. This does not, however, mean that the elections were in any way free or fair. The 2001 election was marred by electoral fraud due to the purposefully lax identification procedure that led to an estimated seventy thousand non Gambians voting in the election.

His rule, however, was marred with exceeding levels of violence. Jammeh passed key legislative decisions that allowed the government to crack down on journalists. This led to the near death of Ousman Sillah (a human rights lawyer who lives in exile in the US), and the death of Deyda Hydara (Saine, 2008).

Jammeh's authoritarian rule was met with lukewarm political resistance until the 2006 elections. While the opposition parties banded together to form the National

Alliance for Democracy and Development, the coalition was short lived due to infighting (Saine, 2008).

The violence was often perpetrated by a paramilitary group called the National Intelligence Agency (NIS). HRW, in a report compiled in the mid 2010s, stated that:

> The government has targeted journalists, human rights defenders, student leaders, religious leaders, political opposition members, judiciary officials, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people, and security force personnel, among others … The government has also shown little regard for the rights of security force personnel who have been accused, rightly or wrongly, of seeking to overthrow President Jammeh.

The 2011 election was won by Jammeh yet again due to divided opposition, but that was not to be the case for the 2016 election. Jammeh made several blunders that led to the opposition to mobilise. First, Jammeh detained Ousainou Darboe, a key opposition leader. Second, Solo Sandeng, another key opposition leader, died in prison. These targeted strikes led to 16 opposition parties banding together to form the "coalition 2016" with Barrow at the helm (Hultin et.al, 2017).

December 9th, 2016, Jammeh seemed to accept defeat to Barrow. The final results were in favour of Barrow (Barrow: 43.3%, Jammeh: 39.6%). Considering that this was the first democratic transition in the history of The Gambia, the citizens tentatively rejoiced. However, the triumph was short lived, as Jammeh decided that he would dispute the election results, which was at that time widely

accepted by the international community, and take it to the courts. He also deployed troops in the capital, Banjul, and the biggest city, Serekunda (Hartmann 2017).

While there were serious efforts to mediate the crisis, none worked. Jammeh was quite resolute. ECOWAS was quick to respond, and engaged in negotiations. ECOWAS's two pronged approach was to continue negotiations, and create a force on standby to ensure Barrow's presidency should Jammeh refuse to step down by his end of term. However, with the threat of military intervention and his army chief pledging loyalty to Barrow, Jammeh conceded his loss (Hartmann, 2017).

As per his agreement with ECOWAS, Jammeh went into exile to Equatorial Guinea, albeit without paying for his human rights infractions. He was still able to retain ill-gotten money from his time as president and lives quite comfortably even after defeat.

Freedom House categorized The Gambia as "not free" between 2013 and 2016. After Barrow came into power, the designation changed to "partly free". Freedom house states that while certain freedoms and rights have been restored, discrimination against LGBTQ community and violence against women are still prevalent.

Gambia's case closely mirrors Cote d'Ivoire, which had gone through its own presidential-level dispute a few years before The Gambia. Much like The Gambia, Cote d'Ivoire was ruled by one head of state for decades after its independence. In the case of Cote d'Ivoire, the president was none other than the prominent Houphouet-Boigny. When the founding father passed away, Bedie -- a

member of the same party -- became president. Bedie was ousted in a coup and Ivory Coast was ruled by the former general Gueii for a short period of time. However, Gueii lost an election to Gbagbo. Gueii contested the result via militaristic means but was eventually put in exile by the government.

Gbagbo was president during the First Ivorian Civil War, which was also against the forces of Ouattara against Gbagbo forces. The first civil war was caused by legislation that mandated presidents to have parents who are both citizens of Cote d'Ivoire. Since Ouattara did not qualify, it was clear that the legislation was to bar him from running for office. The violence was quelled with a peace agreement in Ouagadougou in 2007. It was due to this conflict that the 2010 election was Gbagbo's first re-election campaign.

Gbagbo, in turn, refused to leave his position after his defeat to Ouattara. Both Gbagbo and Ouattara were sworn in at the same time. This, of course, led to military conflict between the two camps. While international governments and international organizations placed sanctions, they were not effective. The sanctions led Gbagbo to adopt an ultra-nationalist stance that deterred the French and ECOWAS from conducting military interventions (Banegas 2011). Gbagbo also utilized the Student Federation of the Ivory Coast (FESCI) -- which played a big part in the democratization of the country -- along with the army in order to effectively create a state within a state (Banegas 2011).

While Gbagbo relied heavily on militaristic approaches, Ouattara resorted to legalistic approaches, which was not at all effective in the short term. In the long

term, Ouattara's dependence on the international community translated to a slow tightening of options for Gbagbo due to the financial strain put by the sanctions (Banegas 2011).

The conflict was only resolved when French troops, along with pro-Ouattara militants, arrested the former president. Gueii was then sent to the Hague to be tried for his crimes. Cote d'Ivoire's ranking in Freedom House did not change and remained "partly free" in during and after Gbagbo.

The 2016 constitution limited the presidential term limit to two terms, limiting the maximum years of presidency 10 years. This would have meant that Ouattara should not have been allowed to run in the most recent 2020 elections. However, due to the fact that the front runner for Ouattara's party -- the Rally of the Republicans (RDR) -- passed away before the election, Ouattara announced that he would in fact be running in the election. He reasoned that the 2016 constitutional reform voided his first presidency. His decision to run was backed by the Independent Electoral Commission and the Constitutional Court.

This brazen act of subverting the rule of law was met by boycotting by the opposition parties. Freedom House reported that the elections were "neither free nor fair." Out of the 44 parties that put their candidates for the election, only 4 were approved.

One must remember that The Gambia has not had a democratic transition before 2016. Jammeh became president after a coup, and the previous president was elected by the national assembly. Considering that the 2016 transition was the first

of its kind, democratic resilience might only be seen in future elections and their successes.

While it is regrettable that The Gambia is not capable of handing a sentence regarding Jammeh's many human rights violations, the fact that Jammeh is out of the picture should be some consolation.

Much like The Gambia, there have only been a handful of presidents in Côte d'Ivoire. Ouattara is only the fourth president of the country. The most recent election, however, shows that true democratic transition is more of a dream for this country. Ouattara's policies have become more and more oppressive.

The repression and subversion of law that was prevalent in Gbagbo's term has been very visible in Ouattara's presidency as well. Considering the level of violence that pro-Ouattara forces committed during their civil war in 2011, it shouldn't be surprising that the president would resort to such methods. While Ouattara's misguided interpretation of the constitutional limit of term in the most recent election might be the most striking detail, one should also consider the next presidential election. Considering that even Ouattara conceded that there is a term limit -- he just decided to consider his first term void -- it would be less likely that he would use the same excuse in the upcoming elections.

The DRC

The Democratic Republic of the Congo had been ruled by a single family since Mobutu Sese Seko was overthrown until 2018. President Laurent Kabila, father to Joseph

Kabila, overtook the capital and was elected president in 1997. Unfortunately, Kabila senior was assassinated in 2001. The assassination led to Joseph Kabila gaining the seat of the Presidency. There was no formal election (Sando, 2002).

While Joseph Kabila's presidency wasn't completely without controversy, his abuse of power showed when he refused to step down after his second term. As per the Congolese constitution, presidents are only allowed to be in office for two terms. While it seemed like Kabila, much like the DRC's previous leaders, would not leave office, he eventually caved and declared that elections would be held in 2017. However, the election was delayed until 2018. Kabila was effectively in power until the election.

The 2018 election marked the first election in 20 years in which Kabila wouldn't participate in. While the former president was barred from running in the race, he endorsed his former interior minister, Emmanuel Ramazani Shadary. The key opposition figures were Félix Tshisekedi and Martin Fayulu.

Tshisekedi was victorious in the election, to the surprise of many (Englebert 2019). The Catholic Church, which stationed 40,000 electoral observers in the nation, expected Fayulu to win with a big margin. While Fayulu contested results, there was no way for his case to be presided over fairly when Kabila's former chief of staff was leading the constitutional court. Kabila's allies won the majority of seats in Parliament, which could only mean that the DRC was not out of Kabila's grasp yet (Englebert, 2019).

Kabila, now a senator for life, still exercised enormous amounts of power after he left office. Tshisekdi had to form a coalition with the former president, since his party did

not win a majority needed. This meant that over two thirds of cabinet positions were given to pro-Kabila politicians. What ensued was endless squabbling from both sides.

Late 2020, however, the Tshisekedi declared that the coalition with the previous president would end. He also struck a vote of no confidence against the Prime Minister, Sylvester Ilunga, who was an ally of the former president. He then went on to meet with the key opposition figures -- Katumbi and Bemba -- to create a "sacred union" that would challenge the former president's party. The situation is still ongoing, but reports tell that such a union would be unlikely.

It would be important to note that the "not free" designation for the DRC did not change with the government transition. There is no reason to believe that the living conditions for the citizens have improved at all since Tshisekedi came into power.

All other cases observed in this study have had the president leave the country or become irrelevant in the years preceding the election. Kabila has not only been able to maintain his status as senator-for-life but has also been able to exercise an exorbitant amount of power.

Kabila's stalling tactic when it came to exiting the presidency was met by widespread protests and international condemnation. It certainly was a win when he decided that he would not run for president in the most recent presidential election.

According to most independent polls, Fayulu should have won. The election upset was due to widespread electoral fraud, such as whole voting machines disappearing (Englebert 2018). This infraction, and others, were observed by the Catholic Church and many other international observers.

The challenge of the election, considering the court was in Kabila's hands, was never going to be a successful option. Kabila quite brazenly stole the election from the rightful victor through nefarious means and put a leader who was at his mercy due to Kabila's majority in congress.

Considering these two infractions in the electoral process that the outgoing president should not have had involvement in, it is hard to say that Kabila's leaving office has been a boon to DRC democracy.

Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe had been ruled by Mugabe since the late 80s. Mugabe's rule only ended when the army took him down with a coup. Mugabe's long reign should not be construed with domination -- that was hardly the case. Zimbabwe had a substantial opposition party that started with the ZCTU (Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions). However, the fact that ZANU-PF had no internal ties with workers unions is shocking since its ideology and the completely different approach of its neighboring Zambia (LeBas, 2011).

ZCTU was formed by the ruling party to corral the workers unions. However, the ZCTU was never able to establish a strong connection with the workers on the ground. ZCTU's policies changed drastically when Tsvangirai became the president, as he was responsible for the split from the ruling party. Under Tsvangirai's leadership, ZCTU became the main vocal opponent to Mugabe and his government.

However, the ZCTU was not the only opposition party that formed in the 90s. The National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) was formed and merged with the ZCTU to create the MDC (Movement for Democratic Change). The MDC, led by opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai, managed to successfully oppose Mugabe and his ZANU-PF in the 2000 constitutional referendum. This loss was the official starting point for electoral violence in Zimbabwe (Levitsky&Way, 2010).

The following elections were marred by electoral violence in order to keep MDC at bay. At points, it seemed like the MDC would win over Zimbabwe. In particular, many believed that Tsvangirai would win the 2002 election (Levitsky & Way, 2010). However, an oppressive campaigning front he side of the Mugabe camp led to a loss for the MDC.

The MDC split into two factions at the wake of the 2005 senate elections: MDC-T, which was led by Morgan Tsvangirai, and MDC, which was led by Welshman Ncube. Naturally, the fractioned opposition made it less likely for ZANU-PF to be threatened. After yet even more electoral fraud from the ruling party, MDC-T and ZANU-PF established a unity government in 2009. While this allowed Tsvangirai and his party to gain a level of power that they didn't previously have, the real power remained with the ruling party.

The 2008 election was the first real challenge to Mugabe and ZANU-PF's hegemony. Tsvangirai was able to win the first round of voting with just shy of 50 percent. It is theorized that the election was tampered with, and that Tsvangirai would have won with enough votes to win without a runoff (Levitsky & Way, 2010). The 2008 election resulted in a power sharing structure between ZANU-PF and MDC-T. While this

may have been seen as a victory at the time, the Transitional Inclusive Government implicated MDC-T in corruption. They were also seen as wanting to share the spoils with ZANU-PF rather than thwarting the ruling party (Booysen, 2014)

ZANU-PF (and to an extent Mugabe)'s origin came from fighting against the white Rhodesian government through militaristic means. This meant that -- from the start of independence -- the party was mainly ruled by military leaders. As such, figures such as Mnangagwa and Chiwenga were in key positions. Which is why Mugabe's decision to sack both of them in order to pave the way for his wife to succeed him was met by hostility.

ZANU-PF was painfully aware of Mugabe's mortality and was in motion to pick a successor by the mid 2010s. There were two main factions; one led by Mnangagwa and the other led by Grace Mugabe. Mnangagwa's faction -- nicknamed Lacoste -- had "strong links to the military and key branches of the state. (Beardsworth et.al, 2019)" Grace's faction, the G40 (Generation 40), was a ragtag group of young politicians that were "associated with but never led by Grace Mugabe," From the start, Grace Mugabe's political ambitions were not supported by the general public -- she was widely unpopular due to her lavish lifestyle in the time of crisis for Zimbabwe. Mugabe's decision to sack the most important members of Lacoste was him implicitly supporting his wife's political dreams.

In light of the sackings, the military staged a coup -- named "Operation Restore Legacy" -- in order to oust Mugabe and put Mnangagwa in a place of power. The coup also resulted in the banishment of Grace Mugabe and G40 from ZANU-PF. The coup,

however, was a temporary solution for the Mnangagwa's faction, as any violent non-democratic means of taking power would not be looked upon fondly by the international community. Therefore, Mnangagwa would run as a candidate during the 2018 elections.

In preparation for the first presidential election without Mugabe in a generation, the MDC-T allied with six other parties. However, Tsvangirai passed away in early 2018, leaving the position of leader of MDC-A (Movement for Democratic Change - Alliance) open. Tsvangirai's death led to infighting in the MDC-T camp when Nelson Chamisa seized power.

Beardsworth et al touts that "in many ways the election was a masterclass on how to re-legitimize a government without risking losing power." On the methods Mnangagwa utilized to do so, they go on to write that:

> "First, Mnangagwa effectively ran against his own political legacy, denouncing the Mugabe regime and presenting himself as the 'change' candidate. As part of this process, he promised extensive reforms and global re-engagement, frequently repeating the mantra that Zimbabwe was 'open for business'. Second, meaningful improvements in the electoral landscape were introduced. Despite initial skepticism among the opposition, the campaign was significantly more open than that of 2013. (Beardsworth et.al, 2019).

While it was the case that the election process was admittedly cleaner than that of previous years, the previous elections were no high bar.

The 2018 election brought scores of election observers from around the world: the European Union, United States, African Union, and South African

Development Community, to name a few. EU observers reported that there was voter intimidation and unproportional media coverage for opposition leaders, while US observers reported military use by ZANU-PF for intimidation purposes and the use of bribes such as food to loyalists. The election was hardly fair but was begrudgingly accepted by Africa and the international community (Onslow, 2018).

The MDC, citing the irregularities given by international and domestic observers, contested the elections. Protestors took to the streets and were met with extreme violence by military and riot police. However, the election results were not successfully contested.

Reports from Freedom House suggest that the level of freedom in the country has not improved since Mnangagwa took office. In their 2017 report, Freedom House gave Mugabe's Zimbabwe a "Partly Free" designation. In their 2021 report, Mnangagwa's Zimbabwe got a "Not Free" designation.

The MDC-Alliance fractured due to infighting in 2020: a feat that was attributed to ZANU-PF strategy. MDC-T had already fractured from MDC-A with Khupe at the helm. The Zimbabwean Supreme Court ruled that Khupe was the legitimate successor to the late Tsvangirai. This leadership change led to numerous members of the MDC-A camp defecting to MDC-T.

Throughout the change in leadership, the elite structure remained relatively unchanged. The curtain call for Mugabe's downfall was when Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veteran Association (ZNLWVA) denounced him as a dictator. The ZDF

was critical in removing Mugabe. Adding in Mnangagwa's involvement in Mugabe's regime, it is hard to say that the coup and resulting election changed much in Zimbabwe.

Rather, the coup and the resulting election was more an elaborate charade to show the international community that Mnangagwa is the proper leader of Zimbabwe. It seems that the winner of the election was already predestined once Mugabe formally renounced his presidency.

It is true, however, that the 2018 election was the most successful for the opposition in a decade. While the election was not completely free and fair, the relaxed laws did allow for MDC to be relatively successful. Freedom House reported that "MDC managed to increase its share of parliamentary seats in the 2018 elections despite the uneven playing field." The transitional period and MDC's alliance seem to have been a win for democracy in this aspect.

Should O'Donnell and Schmitter's definition of democracy be applied in the case of Zimbabwe, there has been little to no visible change in the structure of the government that affects the people. Rather, there have been reports of significant human rights abuses.

Another point to focus on is the fracturing of opposition. As mentioned above, Mnangagwa's government has used the dysfunctional power dynamics of the main opposition coalition to break the agreement. A unified opposition was the reason behind the very real challenge in the 2018 elections, but more infighting can only mean that Mnangagwa and ZANU-PF will have less checks and balances in the future.

Conclusion

It doesn't seem like a fall of an autocrat doesn't lead to long term democratic reforms. In the case of Zimbabwe and Democratic Republic of the Congo, the ensuing election was more or less a show for the western order. The winner was chosen from the beginning. The level of democracy in both countries has not gotten better.

In the case of Cote d'Ivoire and The Gambia, the only reason the democratically elected leaders could gain the presidency was through foreign intervention by ECOWAS or France. ECOWAS has had a long history of proactive peacekeeping in West Africa to a degree that is not seen around other parts of the region. One simply cannot see ECOWAS's central African counterpart, CEMAC, doing similar things.

However, intervention from either party is not a given, since ECOWAS intervene when there are personal stakes for the states, and France intervenes when there are personal stakes for the country. In the case of Cote d'Ivoire, the current president is himself an autocrat, having subverted the rule of law to run for a third term.

Should the autocrat be ousted from power, such as Mugabe, Jammeh, or Gbagbo, there is not much wiggle room for said autocrat to retain power. While Mugabe tried to influence the 2018 election by publicly denouncing Mnangagwa and endorsing the opposition, such a move only hurt the opposition due to his reputation. In cases where the outgoing autocrat is able to negotiate, such as with Kabila (or even to a certain extent Jammeh), the autocrat is able to utilize his position in order to stay in power. Either way, however, the empty space left by an autocrat is likely filled by yet another autocrat of varying degrees.

One should note that all of the cases that were examined had a clear line of succession. For Cote d'Ivoire and The Gambia, the next president was already set. For Kabila, there was an election, however delayed, that produced the next president -- however dubious. Zimbabwe clearly was going to have Mnangagwa as the leader after Mugabe. Even Tanzania had a clear line of succession after Magufuli died.

But what if there isn't such a line of succession, or if there are a lot of candidates vying for the position without a clear strongman? Deby, Museveni, Biya, and Kagame all don't have that certain somebody that they are grooming. With the limited amount of contemporary case studies at hand, it is hard to tell.

The three groups most important to an autocrat, as mentioned before, are elite, security apperati, and the masses. Should the masses be able to create civil disobedience that overloads the security apperati, the elites make change. All of the cases, save Tanzania, had different forms of civilian protests. Yet, civilian protests were the result of the actions of the elite and security apperati. Mugabe and Jammeh were at the mercy of the armed forces, since both were betrayed by their own security apparatus. For Mugabe, he was also betrayed by the elites, who were members of his party and the military.

Therefore, while the absence of an autocrat does mean some democratic concessions by the state, the case studies show that such concessions have not translated into tangible changes. Rather, the elite and the security apparatus, unless they are decimated in the leadership change, do not allow for their status quo to be interrupted.

APPENDIX

Tanzania has been regarded as the hallmark for African democracy, since the country has had robust democratic transitions throughout its history. While presidential transitions have been regular since Nyrere left office -- and multiparty elections have been allowed since 1992 -- all of the presidents have been from the CCM (Chama Cha Mapinduzi) party. Even though the opposition parties and media freedom has been more or less guaranteed for a long time, Magufuli's reign as president saw a lot of civil liberties taken away.

While Magufuli's long lasting legacy might well be his strong denial of the severity of COVID in Tanzania, his tenure was marred with subversion of law and violence. Al Jazeera reported that Magufuli "outlawed opposition rallies and broadcasting of parliament sessions; and introduced legislation which rolled back civil rights." During the most recent 2020 election, the majority of independent electoral observers were not let in. The ones that did, such as the Tanzania Election Watch, stated that there were "arbitrary arrests, unlawful detention, sexual violence and violence against women". Critics say that Magufuli was bringing back the one party system (Bamwenda, 2018)

Authoritarian behaviour was never anything foriegn to CCM presidents, however. The previous president Kikwete did not shy from intimidation tactics when it came to winning elections, and passed bills such as the cybercrimes bill that subverted the freedom of press. What makes magufuli's tenure special is that he died in office. While the official cause of death -- told by the government -- was heart related issues, many believe that he died due to contraction of COVID-19.

His death came after weeks of absence, and was followed by the vice president Samia Suluhu taking the position of president by default. Suluhu will most likely stay as president until the next general election.

Both Magufli and Suluhu were not favorites to become president or vice president. Putting Magufuli as the front runner was CCM's attempt to diverge from the corrupt image of the party. Suluhu was also not the top choice as vice president. This is not to say that their political career has diverged far from CCM -- quite the contrary.

While it is too early to tell what kind of president she will be, Suluhu has yet to get the full support of the party. As a Muslim woman from Zanzibar, there might be some pushback to her rule within the party. hospitable to democracy.

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